Yarra Ranges Council

Draft Kindergarten Asset Management Plan (KAMP)

Engagement Summary

About the project

Council manages a large portfolio of community infrastructure, including 40 kindergarten buildings across Yarra Ranges.

We are planning for the long-term future of these buildings, to help ensure future generations of local families can continue to access safe, welcoming and inclusive early learning spaces.

We have developed a draft Kindergarten Asset Management Plan (KAMP) to support future decision-making. In the initial stages, together with service and demographic data analysis and research, the project team held a focus group to assist with the development of the evaluation (later renamed the decision-making) framework. The initial framework considered:

- Community demand for kindergarten places.
- The needs of vulnerable families and communities.
- Whether facilities are fit for purpose.
- Long-term financial sustainability.

Why we engaged

In April 2026, Council invited stakeholders from across the early years sector to help shape the draft KAMP, to guide future investment in Council-owned kindergarten buildings. The engagement aimed to:

- Share information about the project and proposed approach.
- Test and refine the proposed evaluation framework.
- Understand community priorities related to kindergarten buildings.

Who we heard from

Council held a focus group on 30 April 2026 with 17 representatives from across the early years sector, including:

- Parents and carers
- Kindergarten teachers
- Service managers
- Committee members

- Early years providers
- Community sector representatives

What we heard

The main theme was clear: Council should focus on maintaining and improving existing kindergarten facilities before building new ones. Other priorities included:

Fit-for-purpose

Kindergarten buildings need to be:

- Safe and compliant.
- Accessible and inclusive.
- Well maintained.
- Able to meet changing educational and operational requirements.

The need to address ageing buildings and related accessibility issues, before building any new buildings, was highlighted and aligns with the main theme.

Supply and demand

The importance of understanding where kindergarten places are most needed and where there may be an oversupply was recognised. There was strong support for:

- Monitoring future demand.
- Planning for population changes.
- Maintaining services in smaller and regional communities.
- Considering the relationship between Council and privately operated services.

Supporting vulnerable communities

The important role kindergarten plays in supporting children and families experiencing disadvantage was emphasised. Discussion focused on:

- Access to services.
- Supporting children with additional needs.
- School readiness and learning outcomes.
- The unique challenges faced by rural and remote communities.

Financial sustainability

The fact that rising maintenance and running costs for the buildings can impact their viability in the long term. Growing costs associated with the following were highlighted:

- Building maintenance.
- Compliance requirements.
- Playground upgrades.

- Service delivery changes resulting from government reforms.

Choice and flexibility

A recurring theme was the importance of providing families with choice, including valuing access to both:

- Sessional kindergarten programs.
- Long day care kindergarten programs.

While service delivery decisions sit largely outside Council's role, participants encouraged Council to advocate for flexibility and choice where possible.

Key learnings

The engagement highlighted the need for Council to:

- Continue monitoring supply and demand across the municipality.
- Prioritise investment in existing facilities.
- Support vulnerable children and families.
- Balance community need with long-term financial sustainability.
- Plan for changing service models and government reforms.

What happens next?

Using the feedback received, Council has refined the decision-making framework that will inform the draft KAMP. The framework will assess kindergarten facilities by considering:

1. Supply and demand.
2. Fit for purpose/accessibility.
3. Support for vulnerable communities.
4. Financial sustainability and condition.

This approach will help identify priorities for investment over the short, medium and long term.

Final message

While views varied across the focus group, one consistent message emerged:

Kindergarten buildings should be safe, welcoming, accessible and fit for purpose. Council should prioritise upgrading and maintaining existing facilities before investing in new ones.